WOMEN 2000

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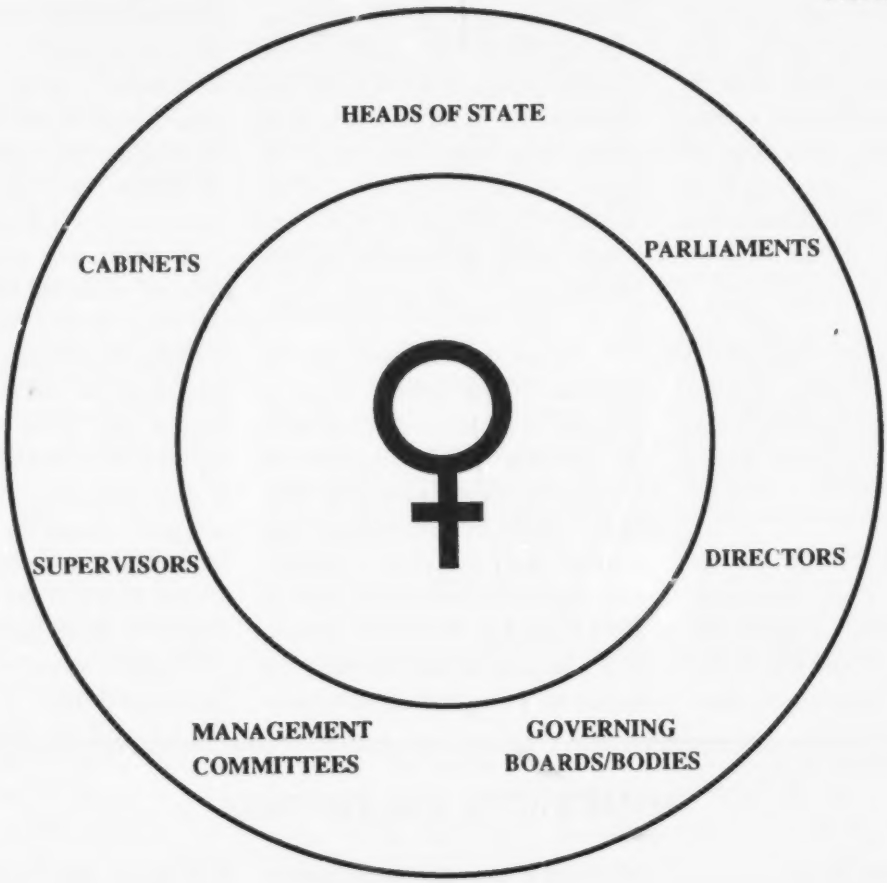

WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING

This issue of *Women 2000* is the second in a series on the subject of women in politics. While an earlier issue, No. 2 of 1989, focused on the mass participation of women at all levels of the political process, the current issue deals with women at the decision-making level. It is based primarily on the report submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-fourth session under the priority theme "Equality in political participation and decision-making" (E/CN.6/1990/2) and on an expert group meeting on the same subject, which was held at Vienna from 18 to 22 September 1989 (EGM/EPPDM/1989/1). The conclusions and recommendations of the experts are highlighted throughout this publication.

INTRODUCTION

Since the incumbents of ministerial posts are always changing, it is not easy to present facts and figures that are valid for any one point in time throughout the world. Data on women in political life are in any case scarce, and totally missing are data on women behind the scenes, who may have advisory positions but no titles. However, while the available statistics may be misleading in terms of the ability and knowledge acquired by women, they do paint a true picture of their minimal representation in the front line of political life.

In her global analysis of women in high-level political decision-making (EGM/EPPDM/1989/WP.2), Kathleen Staudt states as follows:

> "Political culture has its roots in a state formation process in which women had little part. ... Those who study women's occupational integration into masculine institutions document tendencies from assimilation to routinized boundary heightening. Political institutions are one of the most masculine of all institutions, into which women may not easily integrate."

While a few women have succeeded in reaching the decision-making level in politics and thereby broken down some of the barriers and reduced overt male opposition, many obstacles remain to be overcome before women can become an equal and visible party to decision-making processes.

It can be assumed that an increase in the general level of equality in a society would lead to an increase in the number of women in decision-making positions, which, in turn, would make it more likely that policies to promote equality would be adopted by Governments. While no correlation has been found between the incidence of women in decision-making positions and the level of development of a country as measured by its gross domestic product, correlations have been found between the incidence of women in these positions and indicators such as sex ratios in literacy, first-level education and participation in the labour force, in particular industry and agriculture. To overcome the existing barriers to women's participation in decision-making, it is necessary to ensure equality in all other areas. Apart from the obvious changes that are required, such as improving support systems to ease the double burden of women and, above all, convincing men not only to accept women's potential in public life but also to share traditionally female responsibilities, the first and most important step is education. This includes equality of access to education and a diversification in the kinds of subjects chosen by women, who still incline towards study of the humanities and the "caring" professions, thus perpetuating the traditional association between gender and role.

SOME FACTS AND FIGURES

Global level

Of the 159 Member States of the United Nations, the Governments of only five (3.1 per cent) were headed by women as at 31 October 1989 (EGM/EPPDM/1989/WP.2).

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In 99 of the 155 countries on which information is available in the *Worldwide Government Directory of 1987-1988*, 1/ there are no women in ministerial-level decision-making positions, and in 50 women are completely absent from the four highest levels of decision-making (minister, deputy minister, permanent secretary and head of department, or their equivalents). Overall, 3.5 per cent of the ministerial positions are held by women, and 5.2 per cent of the incumbents at the four highest levels are women.

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The average participation of women in national parliaments was 9.7 per cent in 1988, according to the data base Women's Indicators and Statistics (WISTAT).

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In 1989, 20 per cent of the diplomatic staff of the permanent missions to the United Nations in New York were women. Sixty missions had no women on their diplomatic staff and only eight women held the rank of ambassador (E/CN.6/1990/2).

1/ World-Wide Government Directory of 1987-1988 (Bethesda, Md., National Standards Association, 1987).

Regional level

The proportion of decision-making positions held by women is shown, on a regional basis, in table 1.

National level

The following facts are taken from country studies submitted to the Expert Group Meeting on Equality in Political Participation and Decision-making, held at Vienna in September 1989, and were valid at that time unless otherwise indicated:

There are no women in the Government of Algeria, although there were two female ministers in the past. In 1986, seven women (out of 297 members) were elected to the parliament (EGM/EPPDM/1989/CS.3).

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Since the first woman was appointed to the cabinet in Austria in 1966, there have been seven female ministers. At present there are two female ministers and one female secretary of state (in this case, for women's affairs) (EGM/EPPDM/1989/CS.18).

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In Costa Rica, 11 women occupy high office: the Second Vice-President, five vice-ministers and five members of congress (EGM/EPPDM/1989/CS.11).

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There are currently six female ministers in France, and 5 per cent of the elected members of the National Assembly are women (EGM/EPPDM/1989/CS.16).

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Thirteen members (4.3 per cent) of the parliament of Greece are women, but there are no women in the Government (EGM/EPPDM/1989/CS.6).

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In India, there is one female cabinet minister and six ministers of state. Women constitute only 3.4 per cent of candidates contesting election to the parliament (EGM/EPPDM/1989/CS.13).

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Forty members (5.3 per cent) of the Diet of Japan are women, and there is one female parliamentary vice-minister (EGM/EPPDM/1989/CS.5).

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In the Netherlands, there is one female minister and four female junior ministers (EGM/EPPDM/1989/CS.8).

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The Philippines has a female President but only 2 women (8.6 per cent) in its upper house and 18 women (9.05 per cent) in its lower house (EGM/EPPDM/1989/CS.1).

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In Poland, one minister and two under-secretaries of state are women (EGM/EPPDM/1989/CS.4).

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In Spain, 29 members (8.4 per cent) of the lower house of the Cortés, 13 members (5.2 per cent) of the upper house and two members (11 per cent) of the Government are women (EGM/EPPDM/1989/CS.2).

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Women constitute 38 per cent of the Riksdag of Sweden and 33 per cent of all ministers (EGM/EPPDM/1989/CS.9).

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In the United Republic of Tanzania, there are 25 (10.2 per cent) female members of Parliament and five (20 per cent) ministers (EGM/EPPDM/1989/CS.10).

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Women account for some 10 per cent of the members of the Council of Ministers of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and for some 20 per cent of the total number of people's deputies and members of the Supreme Soviet (EGM/EPPDM/1989/CS.17).

Table 1. Percentage of women in ministerial and sub-ministerial decision-making positions, by region, 1987 a/

Region	Ministerial level	Four highest levels
Africa	2.5	3.6
Asia and the Pacific	1.6	2.2
Latin America and the Caribbean	4.0	6.0
Socialist countries of Eastern Europe	4.6	3.7
Western Europe and other	8.9	7.5

Source: E/CN.6/1990/2.

a/ For the purpose of this analysis, countries have been grouped according to the regional groupings used by the United Nations. "Western Europe and other" includes, in addition to European countries, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States of America.

Women hold 28 places in the Congress of the United States of America; they constitute 20 per cent of the appointees of the current administration and in 1988 held 15.8 per cent of all seats in state legislatures (EGM/EPPDM/1989/CS.15).

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In Venezuela, three senators are women, and there are 23 female representatives in the National Congress (EGM/EPPDM/1989/CS.7).

CHARACTERISTICS AND BACKGROUNDS OF WOMEN IN PUBLIC LIFE

There appear to be two types of women in public life, or, rather, two types of approach adopted by such women. Either they are activists fighting for women's causes or they are totally integrated into the existing "male" systems. While the latter approach makes them more acceptable to their male colleagues, the support they afford to other women is negligible. In both cases, whether because of or in spite of being women, they tend to be more industrious and devoted than men in similar positions, and because of their scarcity in numbers, they often feel they have to do better than their male counterparts in order to compete effectively (EGM/EPDM/1989/WP.2).

The general lack of comparative data or, indeed, of any information at all on women in public life makes it difficult to form a picture of the most successful backgrounds and career paths or to differentiate these from the backgrounds of successful men. What is known is that those women who have succeeded in reaching high-level political positions are still the exceptions proving the rule.

The women who have made it to the top have had varying backgrounds, and there are so few of them that generalization is not possible. The basic ingredients, all of which need not be present, are a culturally conducive background, access to formal education at an appropriate level and in relevant subjects, and exposure to public speaking and to political issues. Many women have acquired skills and political education by working with women's associations or specific issue organizations. To start at the grass-roots level of such groups builds confidence for the "self-made" woman, and it also ensures the contacts that will later constitute part of an invaluable networking system.

NEEDED: A CHANGE IN ATTITUDES

The conditions have to be created in which there will be a sufficient number of women in decision-making positions, whether in politics or in the civil service, to make gender an unremarkable attribute and the solution of women for high positions inevitable and normal. Such conditions start with a change in attitudes, both of men and women, towards the traditional sex roles in general and to the political participation of women in particular. An attitudinal change ties in with a decrease or elimination of discriminatory practices in education, both formal and informal, and employment, as well as with the availability of adequate support systems and services.

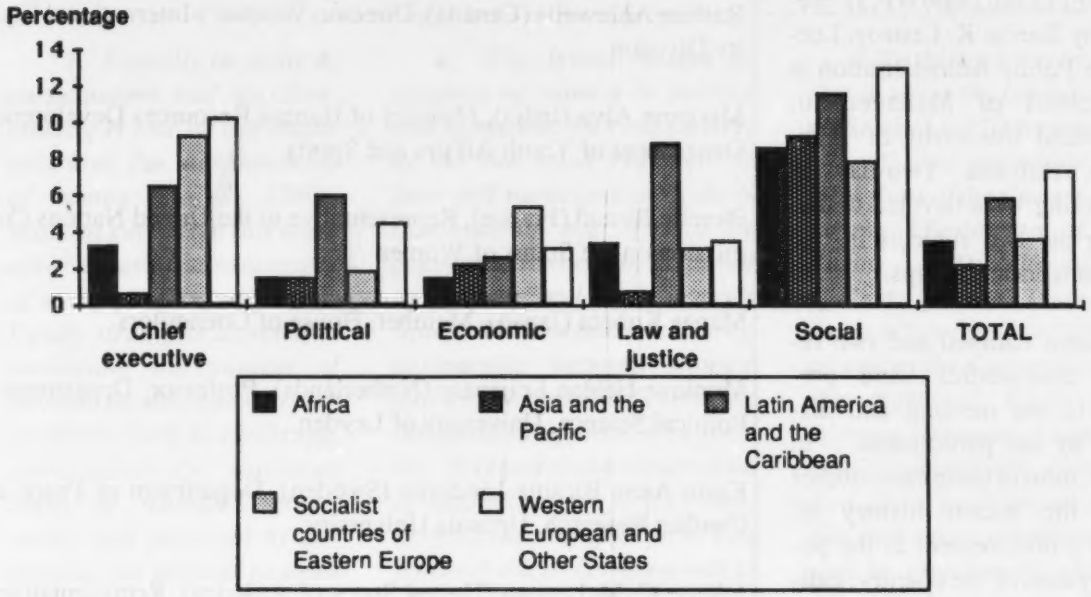
An increase in the numbers of women, leading eventually to a gender balance, should permit women to break the difficulties of group dynamics that categorize, pressure, and potentially assimilate and silence them. Balanced numbers would produce changes in male perceptions and behaviour, as well as strengthen coalitions with others across the sex lines. Empirical research shows that an increased number of women at the decision-making level also affects women's perceptions and the interest and solidarity of women in politics could therefore be won by a substantial increase.

TYPES OF MINISTRIES WHERE WOMEN HOLD KEY POSTS

The distribution, by type of ministry, of decision-making posts held by women is shown in figure I, which illustrates, in spite of regional differences, the tendency for women to be more easily accommodated in the social area and the executive cabinet, i.e. in the prime minister's or president's office, often without portfolio. It must be remembered, however, that the absolute peak of the graph, which represents women in decision-making positions in social ministries in the Western European and other States region, reaches only 13.1 per cent.

READEX

Figure I. Percentage of women in decision-making by type of ministry, by region, 1987



Source: E/CN.6/1990/2.

There are two aspects to this clustering of women in the social ministries. The positive aspect is that this is where the majority education and interest lies (albeit in deference to traditional viewpoints) and where women have the best chance to be active and introduce change and really to work for women. The negative aspect is that this is where women are expected to be and where, if they are active, they "do the least harm". Additionally, in some cases posts are created especially to raise the representation of women. In these cases, the posts rarely carry any real power.

The creation of national machinery for the advancement of women has in many countries resulted in ministries or government offices dealing purely with women's issues. These offices, which are headed by women, enjoy varying degrees of power and influence (see *Women 2000*, No. 3, 1989).

While it is important that women are in positions to make decisions on issues directly affecting women, such issues are not, and should not be, confined to social issues. All areas of politics affect women, who make up half the world's population, and in order for them to become effective agents of change, it is critical that women are present in sufficient numbers in all policy-making organs, especially in the economic and political sectors that remain predominantly male.

EXPERT GROUP MEETING

The Expert Group Meeting on Equality in Political Participation and Decision-making, which was held at Vienna from 18 to 22 September 1989, investigated not only the incidence of women in decision-making positions but also their career paths. Two subjects were under discussion: women in politics *per se* and women in the civil service. There were three working papers before the meeting: "Women and decision-making" (EGM/EPPDM/1989/WP.1), prepared by the Division for the Advancement of Women and covering both subjects; "Women in high-level political decision-making: a global analysis" (EGM/EPPDM/1989/WP.2), prepared by Kathleen Staudt, Professor of Political Science at the University of Texas;

and "The global and regional situation of women top civil servants" (EGM/EPPDM/1989/WP.3) prepared by Denise K. Conroy, Lecturer in Public Administration at the School of Management, Queensland University of Technology, Australia. Two days of the meeting were devoted to discussing the two subjects in two separate working groups.

Sixteen national and two regional case-studies were presented to the meeting and discussed by the participants. In general, most of these case-studies traced the recent history of women's involvement in the political system of the country, indicated the trends of such participation, identified the obstacles preventing women from greater participation and recommended strategies to increase their participation. The conclusions reached were similar, if not identical, e.g. that, in general, women's participation in political life had increased in recent years but was still at a very low level, mainly because of traditional attitudes and male-oriented systems. The general impression relayed by developed countries was that women's interest in politics as well as public confidence in female politicians was on the increase, while in the developing countries, women in decision-making political positions tended to be regarded as exceptions to the rule. These case-studies are to be published, and the first case-study, on Sweden, which relates specifically to decision-making for peace, is already available (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.89.IV.7).

List of experts

Rashim Ahluwalia (Canada), Director, Women's International Equality Division

Margaret Alva (India), Minister of Human Resources Development, Department of Youth Affairs and Sports

Pierette Biraud (France), Representative to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

Manae Kubota (Japan), Member, House of Councillors

Monique Hélène Leijenaar (Netherlands), Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Leyden

Karin Anne Birgitta Lindgren (Sweden), Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University

Juliette C. McLennan (United States of America), Representative to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

Gertrude Ibengwe Mongella (United Republic of Tanzania), Member of Parliament, Minister without Portfolio

Tatiana N. Nikolaeva (USSR), Senior official, Council of Ministers of the USSR, Representative to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

Pilar Perona (Spain), Directora de Programas, Instituto de la Mujer, Ministerio de Asuntos Sociales

Mechtild Petritsch-Holaday (Austria), Co-ordinator of International Women's Affairs at the Federal Chancellery of Austria

Santanina Tillah Rasul (Philippines), Senator, Senate of the Philippines

Sonia Sgambatti (Venezuela), President, Inter-American Commission on Drug Abuse Control

Renate Siemienska-Zochowska (Poland), Professor, Institute of Sociology, University of Warsaw

Eleni Stamiris (Greece), Director, Mediterranean Women's Studies Institute

Lena Patricia White Curling (Costa Rica), Ombudsman on women's rights and Advisor to the Minister of Justice

The four introductory paragraphs of conclusions and recommendations of the experts (E/CN.6/1990/2, annex) are as follows:

"1. Equality in political participation and decision-making is one of the major priorities for advancement of women into the 1990s. Without success in this area, other areas of advancement of women will be put at risk. Equity strategies directed at increasing the number of women in decision-making positions have to challenge, simultaneously, outdated ideas of women's place, worth and potential by improving the general position of women in society, and removing their generally lower social status and the low value placed on the work they perform.

2. All strategies should make public opinion and decision-makers sensitive to the problems women face. They should encourage action by grass roots groups and organizations, including those of women, to help overcome or reduce these problems. They should identify and promote enabling, facilitating and precipitating factors, such as awareness of the importance of organized political participation and the nature of current power structures, development of negotiating and policy-making skills, and creation by non-governmental organizations of links to Governments.

3. The issues related to progress of women in politics and women in the civil service, as the two main channels to their full participation in decision-making, are affected by general advancement achieved by women and their overall status. This includes achieving partnership between women and men in the task of changing the position of women in society. It requires the elimination of attitudinal prejudices concerning the role of women. The political will by Governments to change the conditions of women must be ensured, together with recognition of the economic value of women's work and their equal status. Steps must be taken to ensure the involvement of women in all planning and policy-making processes and forums. There should be provision of infrastructure and social support measures to support women's participation and career development. There must be support and networking amongst women at the national and international level to assist women to become more visible (especially successful women). A basic goal is to assure that there will be sufficient women to make gender an unremarkable attribute and the selection of women for high positions unavoidable.

4. To this end, it is necessary to stress the importance of the need for Governments to ratify and implement the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (General Assembly resolution 34/180) as well as the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (General Assembly resolution 640/VII). In addition, those multilateral treaties that remove barriers to, and in, employment should be ratified and implemented by Governments. These include International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conventions Nos. 100, 103, 111, 122, 156, and 158; a/ and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention against Discrimination in Education, adopted by the General Conference on 14 December 1960, and the 1962 Protocol to that Convention."

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a/ International Labour Office, Conventions and Recommendations 1919--1981 (Geneva, 1982).

Participants of the expert group meeting

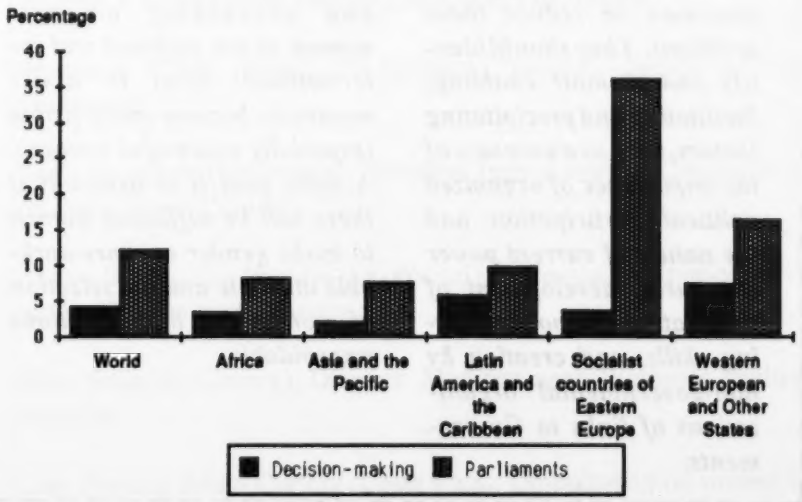
WOMEN IN POLITICS

The political road to decision-making positions usually leads through the parliamentary system via political parties, trade unions and associations concerned with particular issues. It has been found that, to a certain extent, the lack of women in the political foreground is due to their scarcity within those organs. Even where parties, unions or associations have a relatively high percentage of female members, there are only a few, if any, women in the top echelons and executive bodies. For this reason, the number of female parliamentary candidates is limited, and the higher up the political ladder one looks, the fewer women are to be seen. The participation of women in political parties and parliaments was studied in *Women 2000*, No. 2, 1989.

It can be noted from figure II that, although there are regional differences, the percentage of female parliamentarians, although low, is always far higher than that of women in decision-making positions.

In a number of countries, affirmative measures have been adopted to ensure adequate participation by women at all levels of political parties, parliaments and trade unions, including their governing bodies and executives. While there is no consensus on the desirability of the measures, it should be noted that positive results can be observed in Scandi-

Figure II. Percentage of women in executive decision-making positions (1987) and in parliaments (latest figures), by region



Source: E/CN.6/1990/2.

navian countries, which have a generally higher level of participation by women in politics and decision-making.

Women have begun to develop their own networks, building connections among grass-roots organizations, women's movements, politicians and career women representing various professions. Experience has shown that in countries where such networks have been developed, where advanced studies and training courses in political science, law and management are accessible and attended by women, and where there are well-developed social support services, women's mass participation in politics is high and their participation in decision-making higher than average, both in regional and global terms.

Mechanisms such as social contacts, participation in campaigns, lobbying and membership of clubs, which have been developed and used by male politicians and which have sometimes been an impediment to the political advancement of women, are now becoming accessible to and being used by women.

The issue of women in politics is addressed in paragraphs 5-44 of the conclusions and recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting (E/CN.6/1990/2, annex):

"5. The basic principle of full participation of women in all spheres of life includes their participation in politics. This is clearly set out in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, b/ the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Political Rights of Women. There is a close reciprocal relationship between the general advancement of women and participation of women in politics. Women's political participation is enhanced to the extent that social and economic support structures exist, legal discrimination is eliminated, and stereotyping of women in education and the media is avoided. Increased participation by women in politics can help improve social, economic, legal and cultural conditions for women. Advancement of women should therefore be considered a priority in national decision-making, and women should be full partners in those decisions.

6. It is important that women at all levels of society be aware that their daily life, their problems and their solutions are essentially political. What has been termed 'the politics of everyday life' should constitute a means of motivating women to increase their participation. Women must be aware of the importance that politics play in their individual present and future and the potential that their participation would have in changing the nature of politics. This positive role of women in politics should be reflected in educational material, the mass media and other forums in which cultural values are projected.

7. It must be recognized that politics take place according to the national context, culture and experience. There are also regional variations and women themselves are not in many respects a homogeneous group. Women in all countries, however, share a common condition: they are not full participants in the public choices that affect their lives. This must change.

8. The full involvement of women in politics will imply a qualitative change in the nature of politics. It will encourage greater sharing of public office and it will lead to a strengthening of the democratic processes in all societies.

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b/ Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985, chap. I, sect. A.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

1. National policy

9. A 'gender equality policy' should be adopted, aimed at increasing the number of women in decision-making positions at all levels.

10. A balance should be achieved in public appointments, moving beyond absence of women or tokenism.

11. More women with linkages to organizations representing women's interests should be appointed to promote accountability and to enlarge their social base of support.

12. Efforts to expand the political agenda to include issues of particular relevance to women should continue and lead to a consolidation of these issues in terms that will stimulate both women and men to deal with them together.

13. Issues of particular relevance to women should be given high priority in national development to make optimal use of women's potential and participation.

14. Efforts should be made to make policy questions, proposed legislation and the debates about them transparent and readily available.

15. National machineries for the advancement of women should be encouraged to pay special attention to political empowerment of women in formulating and implementing programmes, collecting and disseminating information and mobilizing resources.

16. Effective measures should be adopted to ensure the fairness of the media towards women in public life, including legislation if necessary.

17. Social guarantees and social support measures should be provided to facilitate women's participation in decision-making.

18. Efforts should be made to ensure the appointment of women to decision-making posts in ministries in which women are most underrepresented such as those concerned with foreign affairs, defence, interior affairs, trade, finance, agriculture and the economy.

19. Efforts must be made to increase the levels of literacy and basic skills among women as a means for their empowerment.

20. Priority should be given to increasing civic education, including equal participation of women, in formal and non-formal education systems, with an emphasis on 'legal and political awareness'.

21. National machinery should be strengthened by enabling it to monitor the incorporation of women's concerns in all government ministries, including their budgets, and be provided with adequate resources to carry out their tasks.

2. Political parties

22. As an interim measure, substantial targets, such as quotas or similar forms of positive action to ensure women's candidacy for office and participation in political party posts, should be adopted.

23. Training programmes should be developed to increase the political and management skills of women in politics, both as candidates and as elected or appointed officials, especially making use of the experience of other women who have achieved public office.

24. Women's sections of parties should be evaluated and strengthened to enable them to influence party policy and promote female candidacy.

25. Information on potential women candidates should be compiled, maintained on a systematic basis and made available when candidacy or appointments are considered.

26. Parties should be encouraged to examine the criteria used to select persons for political functions to ensure that the varieties of experience possessed by women are taken into account in selection.

27. Training activities should be developed to make party members sensitive to the needs and potentials of female members.

28. As an interim measure where the electoral system might make it useful, parties should undertake special measures to provide funding for women candidates for office.

3. Other organizations

29. As an interim measure in trade unions, farmers' associations and related economic organizations, co-operatives and professional and other associations, substantial targets, such as quotas or similar forms of positive action should be adopted to ensure women's participation in decision-making posts.

30. Women's organizations should compile, maintain on a systematic basis and make available information on women with relevant qualifications when candidacy or appointments are considered by public entities.

31. Training for women in political skill building, media relations and resource generation should be provided within organizational programmes.

32. Women's organizations should increase their participation in civic and political education, including the formation of groups to lobby actively for their interests.

4. Information

33. Relevant data on women's participation at all levels of public decision-making should be collected periodically at the national level by Governments.

34. Studies of women's participation in politics, both in quantitative and qualitative terms, should be encouraged as part of research programmes.

35. Networks among scholars concerned with the examination of women's role in politics should be supported at both national and international levels.

36. Publications providing biographical or other information on political figures should identify and include women.

5. International action

37. Monitoring of the Nairobi Strategies should include information on women's political participation and decision-making and a data base for that purpose should be developed by the United Nations, in collaboration with Governments.

38. The United Nations system should set definite time-bound targets to increase the number of women in senior management posts.

39. Networking among women involved in politics should be supported at both national and international levels.

40. The United Nations system should give increasing support to national machinery, particularly in terms of development of civic education and other measures to increase the participation of women in politics as a specific form of operational activity.

41. Countries who have not yet ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women should be encouraged to do so and States parties that have entered reservations should make them known to their citizens and take all practical measures to implement the Convention, especially article 7 thereof.

42. The United Nations should take the lead in organizing exchanges of information and experience among countries in political participation and decision-making and report on this periodically to the Commission on the Status of Women.

43. Member States should make special efforts to increase the number of women in their delegations to international meetings, especially those concerned with political and economic matters.

44. The United Nations should give continuing high priority to the advancement of women in the economic and social programmes of the organization and especially in the context of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade and similar long-term planning documents."

WOMEN IN CIVIL SERVICE

National

Many politicians have risen to their decision-making positions through careers in national civil services. Statistics are not available to illustrate the career paths of those holding political posts, but problems confronting women in public service indicate that this path would be just as difficult for them to follow as the channels of a parliamentary system. These problems are perceived to lie in the area of personnel policy, which tends to restrict women's career paths, specifically in the recruitment, promotion and appeals mechanisms, as well as in job classification and training and career development opportunities. While few data are available, it would appear in general that predetermined categories of "female" jobs are available to women and that the path for advancement or diversification is kept unclear and, to a great extent, unattainable.

To rectify the situation, the policies would have to be made transparent, personnel practices would have to become non-discriminatory and public, and arrangements for workers with families would have to be improved. Training and career development opportunities should be available to all, and women should be distributed throughout all levels of the administrative hierarchy, including the decision-making level, and in all functional areas. The level of education and choice of field of study naturally also play an important role in this path of progression.

In some countries, affirmative action has been undertaken. Where proper mechanisms have been established for a number of years, the participation of women in top levels of the executive has increased visibly. For example, in Norway the average participation of women reached 20.3 per cent, of which 33.3 per cent was at the ministerial level and 31.8 per cent at the level below that.

International

The United Nations system is the world's most complex civil service. According to the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, it is expected to be a model for national civil services. However, the participation of women in the United Nations system at the Professional level (table 2) is low. The proportion of women in senior management (3.6 per cent) is, in fact, only slightly above the world average for such top-level positions.

Within the United Nations Secretariat, a pattern similar to that within most national civil services can be observed, i.e. a clustering of female staff at entry levels and their representation gradually deteriorating as the grades rise. One of the causes of

Table 2. Female staff in Professional posts as a percentage of total Professional staff in the organizations of the United Nations system (as at 31 December 1988)

	Type of professional post				
	Management		Professional		
Type of organization	Senior (USG, ASG, D2)	Middle (D1, P5)	Regular (P4, P3)	Entry-level (P2, P1)	Total
United Nations Secretariat	5.2	13.7	32.8	41.9	28.4
United Nations voluntary funds and programmes	5.0	11.8	28.8	42.9	27.9
Specialized agencies	2.3	6.1	23.3	42.7	20.4
Other a/	0.0	5.3	21.3	71.4	18.8
All organizations	3.6	8.8	27.3	42.8	23.4

Source: Data based on *Personnel Statistics*, prepared by the secretariat of the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Personnel and General Administration Questions of the ACC, July 1989), as presented in E/CN.6/1990/2.

a/ International Trade Centre, International Court of Justice, United Nations University and the International Civil Service Commission.

the near-equality achieved in the entry-level grades is that recruitment to those grades is undertaken through competitive examinations, in which female candidates are as successful as male candidates. For higher-level posts, candidates can be promoted from within the service or recruited from outside.

External recruitment has frequently been considered unfavourable to women. It depends, however, on the submission of candidates by Member States. Many countries still do not nominate submit any female candidates for positions in the United Nations, and most continue to nominate mainly male candidates. This is particularly noticeable for the higher positions. One factor contributing to this is the general underrepresentation of women in delegations to the United Nations, one of the traditional sources of outside recruitment.

With regard to promotion it has been noted that women have tended to be recruited into occupational categories such as general administration, library and language-related posts, where career patterns are truncated by the existing grade structure. This is reflected in the lack of women at senior management levels. As promotion can only be made from the preceding grade, the low number of women in middle and senior management seriously limits the possibility of an increase at the highest levels.

Over the last 19 years, a number of steps have been taken to achieve affirmative action in recruitment and promotion within the Secretariat. Publicity and information campaigns have been carried out and rosters of suitable female candidates for various types of posts have been developed. The promotion, classification and redeployment procedures have been monitored and special posts created to monitor the recruitment and career development of women. Policy guidelines on the creation of conditions conducive to the full integration of women in the Secretariat have been issued and a number of measures have been instituted to overcome the past inequalities that had been identified by an *ad hoc* committee on equality appointed by the Secretary-General.

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The issue of women in civil service, both national and international, is addressed in paragraphs 45-68 of the conclusions and recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting (E/CN.6/1990/2, annex):

"45. Women are clearly underrepresented in civil services, especially at the decision-making levels. It is difficult to assess the exact status of women in civil services because of differences in national systems, classification structures and a general lack of documentation. In some countries, no data on the civil service exist at all. Where they exist, they are not always presented by gender, nor are they always available to the public. It may not be in an accessible form or in a location that is obvious. Further data, especially on recruitment, career development opportunities and barriers to those, are obviously necessary.

46. What is known is that the number of women in decision-making is not related to the level of a country's development as measured by gross domestic product or to the size of its public sector as measured by the country's public consumption expenditure. For some countries, on which data exist, the number of women in decision-making is related to general improvment of the status of women in the country. It is related to progress in improving female literacy, achieving progress in equality in access to first-level education and to an increasing participation of women in the labour force. The achievement of a 'critical mass' of women in decision-making positions (estimated at 30 per cent), increasing urbanization and a generally increasing freedom from other inhibiting factors were also important in the countries studied.

47. Women seeking entry in the civil service face the same obstacles as other women, including difficulties in access to education, the double burden of work and household responsibility, the effects of history and custom, the results of past socialization, stereotyping and direct

discrimination. They also encounter specific obstacles, such as rules relating to entry that are disadvantageous to women more than to men (including the content of selection tests or entry examinations) or that are not clearly stated or visible. They confront appointment and recruitment systems that are 'closed' rather than 'open', and often based on patronage. Even a merit-based system is often not gender-neutral in practice. In some cases there is a lack of training in selection and appointment processes which would help to make members of recruitment panels sensitive to their own biases. In addition, the economic constraints faced by Governments (e.g. zero growth and cutbacks) affect opportunities. Moreover, women tend to be appointed at lower levels and salary scales than men, even though they may have equal or superior qualifications. Women are more often placed in agencies that traditionally employ women, thus reinforcing stereotyped occupational distinctions and limiting their opportunities.

48. Once in the civil service, women face further obstacles. In some countries, these include direct and indirect discrimination in the application of personnel processes, either because of a lack of anti-discrimination laws or equal employment opportunities or failure to apply them. This problem is particularly acute in terms of sanctions and appeals mechanisms and bias in job evaluation and classification. The economic constraints faced by the public sector can either limit the expansion of posts or actually reduce them in ways that affect women more than men. There are also problems caused by a lack of professional guidance or supervisor support for career development, unequal opportunities in training and career development resulting in differential promotion rates. Women often also become marginalized in specific kinds of jobs frequently associated with the implementation of affirmative action in the civil service without prospects of career development. They may face special stress factors that do not affect men in their job performance as much, arising from discrimination, stereotyping, social isolation at work and the double burden of work and household duties.

49. Research needs can be identified that focus on the de facto situation of women compared to men in the top civil service positions. From the data available (or lack of data), specific areas of research can be specified that are needed to explain the reasons for lack of career progression, as well as patterns of work history. Attitudinal measures and a focus on sociological questions about career development in, or lack of access to, the civil service are necessary.

50. To deal with this situation recommendations cover all levels of civil service activity - international, national, regional, local - and all levels of decision-making but there should be emphasis on the senior civil service positions as may be defined by each of these levels.

51. At the international level, in the United Nations Secretariat, the role of the Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nations Office at Vienna, as the focal point for the advancement of women, should include, in collaboration with other relevant organizations of the United Nations system, collecting and analysing data on women as well as maintaining the implementation of legal instruments and recommendations addressing the issue of equal participation of women in decision-making areas.

Specific recommendations

1. Strategies for government action

52. All civil services should have clear statements on all personnel practices (i.e. recruitment/appointment, promotion, training and development, leave entitlements and other conditions of service, including appeal mechanisms).

53. Where possible, women should serve on all committees (especially appointment and promotion committees).

54. Civil services should accept it as legitimate that

equal employment opportunity and affirmative action strategies are a necessary part of human resource management.

55. The disadvantages that women experience in their pursuit of career development vis-à-vis men should be mitigated.

56. Equitable distribution of women throughout all levels in the administrative hierarchy should be promoted (to avoid concentrations at the lowest levels) and in all functional areas (especially in areas regarded as non-traditional for women).

57. The number of women in decision-making positions in all civil and foreign services (including international and inter-governmental organizations) should be improved.

2. Research, data collection and analysis

58. Research priorities should be established to cover all levels of civil service activity.

59. Data disaggregated on the basis of sex should be kept by all official agencies in a useful and accessible form.

60. Checklists, guidelines and methodologies for collection and analysis should be developed and disseminated at the national level to all ministries for civil service functions, and data collection should be strengthened or established where required.

61. Data collection should include both quantitative and qualitative information, especially on how civil service systems work, what significant changes to legislation, regulations, rules, affecting the employment and progression of women in the civil service have been made, and data on the role of women in the civil services.

62. Data analysis should emphasize comparison with equality indicators based on measurable targets and should compare men and women in civil services in terms of both similarities and differences in career development, taking into account different agencies, classification levels, functional division of agencies (e.g. chief executive, political, economic, law and justice, social), visibility of agency and importance in the national decision-making structure.

63. The results of analysis should be presented clearly and be in an accessible form.

3. International action

64. Recognizing that research and policy analysis at the international level has not adequately dealt with the question of women in the civil service, the United Nations Secretariat (Division for the Advancement of Women), in close collaboration with other relevant organizations of the United Nations system, should commission research on the civil service, using local researchers independent of government when possible.

65. The United Nations should request data every five years from all relevant sources (including Governments, international agencies, non-governmental organizations, especially women's groups, national machineries and research institutions) in order to evaluate collected data on women in civil service positions for each country or region and monitor progress made between collection periods, on gender-equality indicators and on whether there has been implementation of all relevant international treaties.

66. The Women's Indicators and Statistics data base (WISTAT) should be expanded to include women in civil services at all levels.

67. The United Nations Secretariat (Division for the Advancement of Women), in close collaboration with other relevant organizations of the United Nations system, should prepare a roster of experts comprising individuals, research centres, international organizations and should keep the roster updated.

68. Research findings on women in civil service, including research undertaken outside the United Nations, should be compiled, published and disseminated as part of the United Nations publications programme."

CONSIDERATION BY THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

At its thirty-fourth session which was held at Vienna from 26 February to 9 March 1990, the Commission on the Status of Women considered this subject under agenda item 4(a) Priority Theme: Equality in political participation and decision-making. This theme was given considerable importance by the delegations and the deliberations resulted in the unanimous recommendation of a draft resolution for adoption by the Economic and Social Council.

As part of that resolution, the Commission urged Governments to increase their efforts to make women full partners of national decision-making and recommended that the following measures be introduced to that end:

(a) The regular compilation and dissemination of gender-specific data on the composition of relevant bodies at various levels of national decision-making, at central and regional levels;

(b) The designation of programmes, campaigns, etc. to inform women of their legal political rights, including the introduction of temporary positive action measures and the facilitation of the training of women for leadership and participation in political organizations and trade unions;

(c) The review of educational material with the aim of removing gender bias;

(d) The facilitation of research on women's opportunities of exerting influence and on structural and other obstacles to women's participation in decision-making;

(e) The setting of concrete targets on the number of women in bodies whose composition is of governmental responsibility